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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000869

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DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA
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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#) [ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT-ELECT YAR'ADUA: BIO INFORMATION

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Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Nigeria's president-elect Umaru Musa Yar'adua is relatively unknown both within and outside the country. Yar'adua (a soft-spoken, introvert) is now faced with the daunting task of uniting the country following elections termed as the worst in Nigerian history and disproving the popular belief that he is a figurehead for President Obasanjo's continued political domination. An examination of Yar'adua's character shows a man described as "strange and unpredictable," but "quiet, firm, calculating and independent." Mission sources say he is reserved and seldom participates in arguments, making it difficult to ascertain the beliefs behind his decisions. He rarely travels and reportedly dislikes being outdoors. As a governor, he is well received in his home state and generally considered a prudent manager. In recent public statements, he has stated his initial focus as president will be energy supply, education and security. END SUMMARY.

YAR'ADUA - A QUICK C.V.

12. (U) Umaru Yar'adua was born in 1951. (NOTE: No month or date available.) He attended Rufukka Primary School in Katsina, followed by the Government College in Keffi from 1965 to 1969. He completed a one-year pre-college certificate course at Barewa College in Zaria in 1971. Yar'adua attended Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in Zaria from 1972 to 1975, earning a bachelors degree in chemistry and education. He returned to ABU from 1978 to 1980 for a masters degree in analytical chemistry.

13. (U) Yar'adua has worked as a teacher, farmer, banker, manager of the family business and two-term Governor of Katsina State. He began his professional career as a teacher at the Holy Child College in Lagos from 1975 to 1976) fulfilling his compulsory national service. He taught at various Nigerian schools until 1983, when he left teaching to join his brother in business. He first served as a farm manager at Sambo Farms in Funtua, Katsina State and later as director of other family business interests, including Habib

Bank Plc, Lodigiani construction, Mandara milk company, Nation House Press and Hamada Carpet Holdings. He also sat on the board of government-owned companies and schools before becoming governor in 1999.

FAMILY LIFE

14. (C) Yar'adua is monogamous. He is married to Turai Yar'adua, a full-time housewife who is believed to have exerted a lot influence on his policies as governor of Katsina State. He and his wife have seven children: five girls and two boys. Two of the girls, Maryam and Zainab are married. Most of the Yar'adua children received all of their education in Nigeria, as did Yar'adua. Despite coming from a wealthy home, Yar'adua and his family are not ostentatious and reportedly lead a relatively simple life.

15. (U) Yar'adua's father was Musa Yar'adua, a minister, politician, traditional ruler and chief tactician of the now-defunct Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) -- the ruling party that controlled Nigeria from 1960 to 1966. The family is influential in Katsina, with Yar'adua's daughter married to the Emir of Katsina's son. Over the years, the Yar'adua family has held several important senior traditional titles including "Tafida" and "Mutawalle" which Umaru Yar'adua currently holds. (Note: Holders of these titles are automatic members and influential counselors at the Emir's court.) Yar'adua's late brother, General Shehu Musa Yar'adua, served as military vice president under Obasanjo's first presidency (1976-79). The late General Yar'adua founded a political association that dominated Nigerian politics for decades, eventually merging with other groups to form the current Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in 1998. General Yar'adua died in detention in 1997 while serving a jail sentence for allegedly plotting a coup against late

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General Sani Abacha) he remains highly regarded by most Nigerians.

16. (U) In a recent radio interview, Yar'adua said his interest in politics was greatly influenced by the political activities he saw in his family while growing up as a child. "I was fascinated by the political meetings and activities held in our family compound. I was also encouraged to participate in politics by my late senior brother", he told reporters.

POLITICAL LIFE

17. (SBU) Yar'adua entered politics during the second republic (1979-83) when, as a teacher in a pre-college institution in Zaria, he became a member of the now-defunct Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP) -- a leftist northern party with strong grassroots links. PRP became the hub of northern progressive politicians opposed to the northern aristocracy. It is interesting to note that although Yar'adua's father and brother were financiers of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Yar'adua rebelled and joined the PRP, which was considered the archrival of the President Shagari-led conservative NPN. Until the demise of the second republic in 1983, Yar'adua was the only known PRP member from the Yar'adua family.

18. (SBU) Yar'adua actively participated in the transition program of General Babangida from 1985-1993. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly from 1988 to 1989 and later became a founding member of the Peoples' Front (PF), an influential national political association founded by his late brother that dominated the Nigerian political landscape during the military era. Yar'adua became Secretary of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Katsina State after the PF merged with the SDP in 1990. He contested and lost the governorship seat in 1991. Yar'adua joined the PDP in 1999

along with many other influential former members of the PF. He ran again for governor on a PDP ticket in 1999 and won, being reelected in 2003. As governor, Yar'adua was not well-known outside of Katsina, other than through the popularity of his late brother.

YAR'ADUA AS GOVERNOR OF KATSINA

¶9. (C) Upon taking office in 1999, Yar'adua became the first governor to publicly declare his assets and promised to do the same at the end of his tenure. (NOTE: He has not publicly declared his assets again and has recently seemed to back-track on this promise in public statements.) His priorities as governor were education, provision of infrastructure, agriculture, health and rural transformation and he appears to have done well in these areas. For example, teachers are now better remunerated in Katsina than most states. Katsina is one of the few states where there has not been a labor crisis in the last eight years. Despite these accomplishments, opposition groups complain that his wife and in-laws frequently interfere in state affairs. Yar'adua is also accused of awarding contracts to his own companies, those of his associates and his in-laws.

¶10. (C) According to those who worked under him, Yar'adua selected state cabinet members based on merit and prides himself in providing opportunities for bright people to showcase their talents. He surrounds himself with a few trusted people with whom he consults on a regular basis. His close associates include Katsina State Governor-elect Ibrahim Shema and U.S.-trained economist Tanimu Yakubu, who served as Commissioner of Finance in Katsina. Both men played a significant role in Yar'adua's presidential campaign. Like President Obasanjo, Yar'adua broke ties with the politicians that helped him win the governorship election in 1999, preferring to make new political allies once in office.

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND VIEW ON DISSENT

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¶11. (C) Mission sources have described Yar'adua as "strange and unpredictable," but "quiet, firm, calculating and independent." He is reserved and seldom participates in arguments, making it difficult to ascertain the motivations behind his decisions. Close associates describe Yar'adua as "his own man," willing to make tough decisions regardless of pressure from different groups. According one source, Yar'adua has been known to make unpopular decisions and tenaciously implement them * no matter who around him opposes. He does not accommodate dissenting opinions and does not tolerate opposition within the party. Three years ago, Yar'adua dismissed the leaders of all 34 local councils in Katsina state and appointed his close associates to run affairs until local government elections. Without allowing party primaries, these same close associates were announced as the PDP candidates for the local government elections. Despite public outrage, Yar'adua refused to budge. The PDP candidates were declared winners of the elections by the state electoral agency in an election that was widely seen as flawed. Yar'adua used the same method to select his successor as Governor.

YAR'ADUA'S HEALTH

¶12. (C) Throughout his presidential campaign, no issue generated more speculation than Yar'adua's health) culminating in rumors in late March that he had died. He is known to have kidney problems and believed to receive dialysis treatment two or more times a week. According to an associate, while serving as governor he would remain reclusive for days at a time and then emerge, exhibiting "strange looks that scare people." Mission sources maintain

he prefers to remain indoors and he rarely travels - perhaps due to his health problems, though it appears he traveled little in his youth as well. (NOTE: Yar'adua has reportedly never traveled to the U.S. and he does not presently hold a U.S. visa. He is known to have traveled to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj and Germany for medical treatments.) Poloffs have noted discoloration and skin rashes on his arms during meetings and at times it appears he does not have normal movement in one arm. A Nigerian tabloid published an interview with a psychiatrist who claimed to have treated Yar'adua in a mental institution in his youth. The man said Yar'adua was "as mad as a hatter and that he had to be flogged and chained while receiving treatment in the psychiatric hospital."

CAMPBELL